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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4982  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6633  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 5554  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0495  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 1285  
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0184  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 2095  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0340  
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 1421  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0542  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 3135  
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 1283  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3831  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0460  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2179  
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RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 3588  
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RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0994  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001719

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: CNE DERAILS INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL REGISTRY AUDIT

REF: A. CARACAS 01448

[1](#)B. CARACAS 01287

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT R. DOWNES FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) Via national broadcast June 8, National Electoral Council (CNE) President Tibisay Lucena announced the proposed audit of the electoral registry (REP) would proceed under the terms agreed to by seven Chavista universities and thus without the participation of the three independent universities that initially proposed the audit. This decision in effect rejects the opposition's demands for an independent audit of the REP. While the final chapter may not have yet been written, the CNE's insistence on excluding the independent universities could jeopardize the opposition's participation in the December 3 presidential elections. The three major candidates planned to discuss the matter on June 10. End Summary.

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Lucena Announces Terms of Audit  
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[1](#)2. (U) On June 8, National Electoral Council (CNE) President Tibisay Lucena announced the terms of the proposed university audit of the permanent electoral registry (REP) as approved

by the CNE board. Lucena said the audit, which will run from June 9 to July 31, is designed to complement the work done by CAPEL in 2005 (reftels) and will include a review of the REP for inconsistencies, incomplete data, deceased voters, and prisoners. The current registration process will be studied as well to ensure that all voters have had equal opportunities to register. However, it will not include a comparison of the REP to Venezuela's current demographic make up as proposed by the nation's leading autonomous universities (Central University of Venezuela (UCV), Simon Bolivar (USB), and Andres Bello Catholic University (UCAB)), identified by those universities, as well as the EU and OAS observer missions, as a key fault of the CAPEL audit. As a result, these universities have withdrawn from the audit and it will be conducted by the seven Chavista universities whose rectors are picked by the Ministry of Education. Lucena said the presidential candidates will be allowed to observe the audit. Lucena also announced a timeline for deciding on other opposition demands that would tentatively have all electoral norms in place by July 15. In addition, she called on presidential candidates to designate their representatives to liaison with the CNE.

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CNE Decision Shows Stubborn Unwillingness to Compromise  
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13. (C) On June 8, Primero Justicia Secretary General Gerardo Blyde, a member of declared candidate Julio Borges' campaign, and Hector Alonzo Lopez, from potential candidate Manuel Rosales' camp, told poloffs that the audit terms do not fulfill the opposition's demands for an independent audit of

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the REP, and may cause the candidates to rethink the opposition's participation in the December 3 election. Blyde opined that the CNE's decision was likely intended to increase divisions between the abstentionists and those that want to participate in the election. Lopez saw the decision, as well as the government's stacking of the CNE, as part of a larger political strategy to further demoralize the opposition, relegate it to obscurity, and ensure his hold on power indefinitely. Candidate Teodoro Petkoff publicly blasted the audit terms describing them as a joke that does not restore voter confidence in the electoral process. He called on the CNE to try to negotiate again with the UCV, USB, and UCAB and suggested the opposition develop a strategy for that will preserve the possibility of participating in the election. Blyde and Lopez told us the three candidates will likely discuss the opposition's next steps June 10 during a planned meeting with minor opposition candidates.

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Comment  
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14. (C) The CNE's decision is not a surprise and represents yet another lost opportunity to restore voter confidence. If further proof were needed, it shows that Chavez has no interest in creating any semblance of a transparent electoral process. The audit will be merely a repeat of CAPEL's deficient study and will offer little new insight or recommendations for improving the voter rolls. Blyde's and Lopez' observations about the BRV's motivations are on the mark; in addition, the BRV may genuinely fear the results of an unbiased audit. The effort by the three universities to conduct an independent audit of the REP, essential for transparent elections, was always a long shot. Even when they first raised this formally with the CNE March 14, most observers felt the CNE would stall and attempt to water it down. While this decision appears definite, the three opposition universities have said they are going to give it one more try. We expect the government to repeat last year's pattern of waffling or outright rejecting other opposition demands to draw out negotiations and continue keeping the opposition off-balance for the next few months.

WHITAKER